

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR DON KNABE

June 30, 2015

Catalina Island is a rare gem, known nationally and internationally as a beautiful Southern California tourist town and island get-away location, 26 miles across the sea. Although Catalina Island is a favored destination for close to one million visitors per year, it is also home to numerous local businesses and to 4,096 permanent residents and working class families, with some of the poorest households in Los Angeles County, Title 1 schools, and a lack of affordable housing. Residents and businesses on Catalina Island have been struggling under Phase 2 (25% mandatory water usage reductions) for many years, and the Island's water crisis is predicted to reach Phase 3 (50% mandatory reduction) by the fall. Southern California Edison (SCE) is the only water utility serving potable water to customers on the Island, in addition to providing the Island's electric and gas utilities, SCE is a longtime partner with the City of Avalon and the County of Los Angeles, and these agencies are important to improving and maintaining the aging infrastructure on Catalina Island.

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Phase 3 water rationing will likely have a devastating impact on the Island's economy. 88 percent of the Island's land area is located within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County. Much of this area (known as the Interior) is within an open space easement granted to the County and administered by the Catalina Island Conservancy. The Interior is open to the public for visitors and for recreational purposes throughout each year, including many youth camps and educational programs with ties to the mainland. Under Phase 2 water rationing, SCE customers have achieved an estimated 33 percent reduction, however additional conservation beyond what is currently being done will be difficult, with many businesses such as the hotels and camps facing a reduction in availability, which would have a trickle-down effect on both the local and regional economy. It is in the County's interest to work with the City of Avalon and SCE to ensure a more sustainable and promising water-related future.

Catalina Island's desalination plant, built in 1991, is a SCE facility located at Pebbly Beach in the City of Avalon. The desalination plant at the Pebbly Beach Generating Station provides 25-30 percent of the Island's water supply. SCE and the City of Avalon are working together on an additional second desalination unit at the SCE Pebbly Beach facility, with output capacity of approximately 150,000 to 200,000 additional gallons of freshwater per day – twice Avalon's required off-peak water demand. If the second desalination unit is on-line by the fall, this may stave off Phase 3 water rationing.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Director of Public Works to report back at the July 7, 2015 Board meeting on the following:

1. Identify options for the County to participate in a joint effort with the City of Avalon and SCE for the proposed new desalination plant on Catalina Island;
2. Identify potential funding sources and formal arrangements for County participation, such as a cost-sharing agreement, MOU, or JPA;
3. Report back in 30 days (at the July 28, 2015 Board meeting) on the resources needed to complete an independent, comprehensive evaluation of the water supply system and related activities on Catalina Island with alternatives and recommendations for the Board's review and consideration.

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